DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 444 706 PS 028 779

AUTHOR Chiappetta, Lisa; Harris, Leslie; Moncada, Tara; White, Chris

TITLE Improving Social Competencies through Cooperative Learning, Conflict Resolution and Home/School Communication.

PUB DATE 2000-05-00

NOTE 86p.; Master's Action Research Project, Saint Xavier University and Skylight Professional Development Field-Based Masters Program.

PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses (040)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Action Research; *Behavior Change; Behavior Problems; *Change Strategies; Childrens Literature; *Conflict Resolution; *Cooperative Learning; Family School Relationship; *Interpersonal Competence; Kindergarten; *Kindergarten Children; Pretests Posttests; Primary Education; Prosocial Behavior; Student Behavior

ABSTRACT

This action research project examined the effectiveness of a program to improve kindergartners' prosocial behaviors. Students' lack of social skills was documented by means of teacher and parent surveys, teacher anecdotal records, and behavioral observation checklists. The intervention had four components. The teacher directly taught social skills beginning in the first 3 weeks of school for 10 minutes daily and periodically reviewed throughout the semester. Cooperative groups were used at least twice a week for a total of 40 minutes. Conflict resolution instruction was implemented 10 minutes daily and reviewed as needed. A weekly newsletter was sent to families, and monthly family activities and a book depicting the monthly theme were also sent home. The impact of the intervention was assessed using pre-post parent surveys regarding their child's social skills, teacher surveys, teacher anecdotal records, and the use of a student behavior checklist. Findings indicated that parents identified an improvement in prosocial behavior, with the most substantial increases in following rules, resolving conflicts, and saying please, thank you, excuse me, and I'm sorry. Most negative behaviors declined, with the exception of talking back to parents. Staff also noted a marked improvement in children's prosocial behaviors. The behavior checklist findings indicated a decline in behavior incidents. Throughout the 20-week intervention, teacher anecdotal records noted a marked decrease in the number and severity of negative behavior incidents. (Twelve appendices include data collection instruments and sample instructional materials. Contains 63 references.) (KB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

PS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

EL 444 706

IMPROVING SOCIAL COMPETENCIES THROUGH COOPERATIVE LEARNING, CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND HOME/SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Lisa Chiappetta
Leslie Harris
Tara Moncada
Chris White

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Lisa Chiappetta
Leslie Harris
Tara Moncada
Chris White
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & Skylight Professional Development

Field-Based Masters Program

Chicago, Illinois

May 2000

PS 028779

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SIGNATURE PAGE

This project was approved by

Amy S. Hanson Ph.D.
Advisor

Marguerite Van Leoyoc C.A.S. Nancy Thistry Ma
Advisor

Beverly Hulley
Dean, School of Education

Dedicated to the kindergarten children—

May they all learn to be Caring, Able People

ABSTRACT

This action research project describes a program implemented to improve and evaluate prosocial behaviors. The targeted population consisted of kindergarten students in a self-contained kindergarten building located in a middle class suburb northwest of a large metropolitan area. The lack of social skills was documented through teacher and parent surveys, teacher anecdotal records, and behavioral observation checklists.

Analysis of probable cause data indicated the lack of social skills as a result of changes in family situations, lack of empathy and caring, lack of self-discipline, little direct teaching of social skills, and the negative effects of media.

A review of the solution strategies resulted in an intervention which included direct instruction, cooperative grouping, conflict resolution and fostering child/parent communication. The program included children's literature emphasizing interpersonal skills, techniques in resolving conflicts, role-playing, modeling, lessons in working collaboratively, and increased home/school communication.

The direct teaching of social skills along with cooperative learning, conflict resolution, and increased home/school communication, resulted in improved social competencies in the kindergarten students. Post intervention data indicated an increase in attentive, cooperative, and respectful behavior, both in and out of the classroom.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 – PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT 1

General statement of the problem 1

Immediate Problem Context 1

The Surrounding Community 4

National Context of the Problem 5

CHAPTER 2 – PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION 8

Problem Evidence 8

Probable Causes 15

CHAPTER 3 – THE SOLUTION STRATEGY 24

Literature Review 24

Project Objectives and Process 40

Methods of Assessment 43

CHAPTER 4 – PROJECT RESULTS 45

Historical Description of the Intervention 45

Presentation and Analysis of Results 50

Conclusions and Recommendations 56

REFERENCES 61

APPENDICES

A Parent Questionnaire 66

B Staff Survey 67

C Behavior Checklist 68

D Suggested Literature for Developing Social Skills 69

E Caring Able People Pledge 71

F Monthly CAP Themes 72

G Be A Listener Chart 73

H Cooperate Chart 74

I If You're Mad Chart 75

J Weekly Newsletter 76

K Pre and Post Parent Questionnaires 77

L Open-Ended Parent Questionnaire 79

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

Kindergarten students exhibit social incompetencies which are displayed through their lack of interpersonal relationships such as lack of listening skills, cooperation, respect for one another and authority. Evidence for these behaviors is documented through parent questionnaires, staff surveys, behavior checklists, and anecdotal records.

Immediate Problem Context

Site A is a self-contained kindergarten building that houses 10 classrooms, 1 library, 1 gym, 3 support staff offices, a nurses room, and a general office area. The staff consists of nine kindergarten teachers, 100% female. The rest of the faculty consists of necessary support staff to meet the needs of the mainstreamed, instructional learning disabled students (LD), bilingual students (ESL), speech, social work and related arts. Because of the small faculty, there prevails a warm and comforting environment that fosters a caring atmosphere. Kindergarten skills are developmental in nature and are thus acquired by students at different times during their early childhood years.

As of October 1998, the enrollment for the K-8 district was 3,227 students. The total kindergarten enrollment was 343 students. There is an A.M. and P.M. session with eight kindergarten classes in the A.M. session and nine kindergarten classes in the P.M. session. The

classes averaged 22 students per class with the exception of the ESL/bilingual classes, which averaged thirteen students per class. Staff in the kindergarten building, at that time, consisted of 18 members including 9 kindergarten teachers, 1 speech teacher, 1 part-time social worker, 1 part-time LD teacher, 1 part-time librarian, 3 teacher aides, 1 music teacher and ½ physical education teacher.

The kindergarten curriculum is based upon thematic units. The thematic units are taught using a whole language format. The following subjects are included in this format: phonics, mathematics, science, social skills, and related arts including gym, music and library.

Ethnic background and low/limited income characteristics of the school population are included in Table 1 and Table 2. Site A has a White student population that is slightly lower than the state average, while the Black population is significantly less than the state's population. The Hispanic population is approximately double the state average. Site A's low income student population is below the state average of 36.3%. Limited English students total three times the amount of the state average.

Teachers' salaries average $43,000.00 and administrator's salary average $75,000.00. The teachers' educational experiences are listed in Table 3. The average teaching experience in the district is comparable to the state average. Teachers at Site A with a Bachelor's Degree fall slightly lower than the state's average of 53.5%. Teachers with a Master's Degree and above are slightly higher than the state's average of 46.3%.

The information on Table 4 tracks student attendance, mobility, and truancy. Student mobility is based on the number of students who enroll in or leave a school during the school year. Students may be counted more than once.

Table 1

Racial and Ethnic Background and Total Enrollment

Site	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/P Islander	Native American	Total Enrollment
A	60.3%	4.4%	25.4%	9.9%	0.0%	343
State	62.6%	20.8%	13.3%	3.2%	0.2%	1,951,998

Table 2

Low-Income and Limited-English Proficient Students

Site	Low-income	Limited-English-Proficient
A	5.0%	18.1%
State	36.3%	6.3%

Table 3

Teaching Experience/Education

	Average Teaching Experience	Teachers with Bachelor's Degree	Teachers with Master's & Above	Pupil-Teacher Ratio Elementary
District	15.2%	48.9%	51.1%	17.7:1
	15.0%	53.5%	46.3%	20.0:1

Chronic truants are students who were absent from school without valid cause for 10% or more of the last 180 school days. In Site A, the attendance rate is slightly higher than the 93.9%

of the state. Student mobility remains consistent with state records, and there is no truancy at this level. Site A is reflective of the communities in the surrounding area.

Table 4

Attendance, Mobility, and Chronic Truancy

Site	Attendance	Student Mobility	Chronic Truancy	Number of Chronic Truancy
A	95.0%	18.8%	0.0%	0
State	93.9%	18.2%	2.3%	43,167

The Surrounding Community

The community is located about 35 miles north of a large major city. It has easy access to a major tollway, and accordingly, easy access to two major airports. The community is in one of the most rapidly growing counties in a large metropolitan area, and is increasingly becoming a major employment center. It is also a major center of retail shopping.

The community has a large shopping mall, a vast array of restaurants and other retail stores. It also has many large corporations. The community population is 15,351 as of the 1990 census. The racial/ethnic groups consist of 90.82% White, 1.62% Black, .27% Native American, 6.19% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1.08% other. The school district serves three surrounding communities, with a per capita income average of $22,000.00, and a medium income of $60,000.00. The percent of residents listed as low poverty level is 3.9%, household average is 4.2 persons, and residential housing average is $195,000.00.

Major changes have occurred within the district during the past several years. The district is dealing with increasing enrollment due to two large developments of homes presently being built. The largest impact of these developments is expected to hit the district during the 1999-2000 school year, at which time, the district will be opening its doors to a new junior high school. That same year, the middle school will be housed in the present junior high location. Reorganization of lower grades will consist of two buildings of grades 1-4. Kindergarten will remain housed in its own building and a new option school building will house two classes from grades kindergarten through 6th. A Superintendent and the Associate Superintendent oversee a campus setting consisting of five buildings. Each school has its own principal and assistant principal, with the exception of the kindergarten building which has only a principal. The Superintendent, Associate Superintendent and seven elected members of the community make up the school board.

Community involvement is an important characteristic of the community. It includes a dynamic Parent Teacher's Organization (PTO) and many dedicated parent volunteers. In spite of the positive climate and community, there is a concern over the lack of social skills and negative behavior that children today are exhibiting upon entering kindergarten.

National Context of the Problem

Children today face an extremely challenging social environment. According to Bellanca (1992), there is an increased number of students who have little idea about how to behave in a social organization other than what they have learned from the negative social models that saturate their lives. A survey taken by U.S. News & World Report (cited in Kauffman & Burbach, 1997) revealed that Americans think incivility is a serious problem, and 78% believe that the problem has worsened in the past 10 years. Of those responding, 91% said they think that the

decrease in civility contributes to violence, and 4% think that it is eroding values. Stephen (1993) contends that today's children are not able to respect the rights of others, control expressions of anger, assert themselves in a socially acceptable manner, and share ideas and listen to the ideas of others. Furthermore, in its most recent report on the state of America's children, (as cited in Merrell, 1994) the Children's Defense Fund painted an alarming picture of a nation in which a growing percentage of young children are generally becoming increasingly at risk for a wide array of developmental problems.

Fordham University's Institute for Social Policy produces an Index of Social Health for the United States. The Index ranges between 0 and 100 (with 100 being the best). According to Miringoff (as cited in Garbarino, 1997), from 1970 to 1992 the Index showed a decline from 74 to 41. This means that the overall well-being of our society decreased significantly.

"Kids today are in trouble, more trouble than kids were when I was growing up. Evidence of this is found in research on emotional and behavioral problems among American children" (Garbarino, 1997, p. 12). In support of this contention, Garbarino refers to a study that was conducted by Achenbach and Howell (as cited in Garbarino, 1997) in which they used a tool called The Child Behavior Checklist. This list of 118 specific behaviors was rated by parents (or other adults who knew the child well) indicating the presence (or absence) and intensity of these behaviors. In 1976, 10% of all children studied were found to be in need of therapy; by 1989, the number of children found to be in need of therapy had risen to 18%.

> Achenbach and Howell's data certainly conform to the observations of teachers and other professionals who work with children. In the past few years, I have had occasion to ask those who have worked with children professionally for 30

> years or more what they have observed. They overwhelmingly agree that more and more children are in greater and greater trouble (Garbarino, 1997, p. 13).

According to Zimmerman and Shapiro (1996), a lack of social skills is one of the most common reasons that children get referred to a counselor or therapist. They further state that researchers are saying that not being able to make friends and join a peer group may have serious long range implications as well (Zimmerman & Shapiro, 1996). The teaching of social skills cannot be left to chance. Lantieri & Patti (1996) say that schools today must be committed more deeply than ever before to intentionally creating community and to paying attention to young people's social and emotional lives. Costa, Bellanca, and Fogarty (1992) believe that:

> The overriding implication for the future school is for students to learn how to relate in new and different ways. With the rapid turnover of people in their lives, students in tomorrow's schools will need help in finding ways to accelerate friendship formation, bond to stable forces in their lives, and develop the skills of collaboration (p. 14)...Learning to interact and cooperate with culturally and socially diverse peers becomes the first key to school success (p. 13).

Just as the lack of social skills is a problem at the national level, it is an issue that needs to be addressed at our site.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document a lack of social competencies in the kindergarten students, several assessment tools were used. Those tools included a parent questionnaire, a staff survey, a student behavior checklist, and recorded teacher observations. The sampling consisted of four kindergarten classes, two of which were Bilingual/English as a Second Language (ESL).

Parent Questionnaire

A questionnaire (see Appendix A) was given to 70 parents during the first week of school on parent/teacher orientation day concerning their perceptions of the social competencies of their children. At this time, the questionnaires were completed and collected by the teachers. Twenty-four of the questionnaires were translated into Spanish for the Bilingual/ESL parents. There was a 100% response rate. A summary of the results is presented in Table 5 and Table 6. The questions addressed both positive and negative social behaviors. Odd numbered questions, as shown in Table 5, describe positive behaviors reflecting social skills acquired. In Table 6, even numbered questions describe the presence of problem behaviors.

It was expected that some of the kindergartners would display positive behaviors sometimes. The results of the questionnaire indicate that some children do display positive behaviors but a higher percentage of the children do not display them.

Table 5

Kindergarten Parent Questionnaire, Positive Prosocial Behaviors, August 27 and August 30, 1999

Odd Numbered Questions	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
1. Shares toys and other belongings	0%	17%	24%	75%
3. Willing to take turns (playing games, standing in line, playing with toys)	0%	0%	29%	71%
5. Waits for his/her turn to speak	7%	9%	47%	37%
7. Follows the rules	0%	1%	33%	66%
9. Follows directions the first time	1%	3%	44%	52%
11. Accepts decisions made by adults	1%	4%	26%	69%
13. Regularly uses the following words:				
Please	1%	0%	42%	57%
Thank you	0%	3%	34%	63%
Excuse me	4%	1%	42%	53%
I'm sorry	4%	6%	44%	46%
15. Invites other children to play	0%	9%	30%	61%
17. Stands up for his/her rights	7%	10%	54%	29%
19. Resolves conflict by:				
Talking it out	3%	20%	47%	30%
Leaving the situation	6%	16%	57%	21%
Getting physical	26%	33%	38%	3%

In Table 5, the highest percentages should be in the "Often" column, indicating that more children exhibit the behavior. In six areas, less than 50% of the children display positive behaviors with consistency. Waiting to speak, saying I'm sorry, standing up for his/her own rights, and all areas of conflict resolution are problematic. This evidence is also supported in Table 6 where the negative social behaviors are addressed.

Table 6

Kindergarten Parent Questionnaire, Negative Social Behaviors, August 27 and August 30, 1999

Even Numbered Questions	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
2. Important to always be first	4%	19%	56%	21%
4. Wants all the attention	3%	23%	58%	16%
6. Talks back to parents, teachers or caregiver	24%	40%	29%	7%
8. Must have his/her own way	6%	27%	55%	12%
10. Does not accept losing in a game	4%	22%	50%	24%
12. Whines or complains	10%	24%	52%	14%
14. Bothers or annoys others	19%	39%	41%	1%
16. Destroys or takes things that belong to others	52%	34%	11%	3%
18. Is physically aggressive	37%	37%	26%	0%
20. Does not show respect to adults and other children	27%	39%	26%	8%

In Table 6 the highest percentages should be in the "Never" or "Rarely" columns. In five areas, more than 50% of the children exhibited negative behaviors; important to always be first, wants all the attention, must have his/her own way, does not accept losing in a game, and whines or complains are problematic. According to the results of both Tables 5 and 6, there is a lack of

prosocial behaviors exhibited by the kindergarten students. The staff survey further documented a lack of prosocial behavior by kindergarten students.

Staff Survey

A survey (see Appendix B) was given to 23 kindergarten staff members concerning the observed social behaviors of the kindergarten students. Of the 23 surveys distributed, 18 were completed and returned. The survey asked for displayed positive behaviors to be marked usually, sometimes, or seldom. The results are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7

Staff Survey September 9, 1999

Displayed Behaviors	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom
Please/thank you	11%	78%	11%
Excuse me/I'm sorry	6%	61%	33%
Share	28%	72%	0%
Take turns	17%	78%	5%
Show empathy	6%	72%	22%
Reconcile differences	0%	61%	39%
Help others	22%	78%	0%

Table 7 addresses the positive social behaviors exhibited by the children. Ideally, the high percentages should be noted in the "Usually" column. However, the greater percentages are in the "Sometimes" or "Seldom" columns. This indicates that there is a lack of consistent use of prosocial behaviors in the kindergarten building. The greatest areas of concern are noted in the lack of expressing "Excuse me" and "I'm sorry", taking turns and showing empathy, with the

most serious concern being in their inability to appropriately reconcile differences. The results of these findings were substantiated by the data collected in the parent survey. There is a direct correlation between the results of the staff survey and the parent questionnaire. Both indicate that the children lack a display of good manners and are unable to appropriately reconcile differences. A behavior checklist was devised to gather more information on the children's behavior in the classroom.

Behavior Checklist

A behavior tally sheet (see Appendix C) was developed to record the number of incidences of negative social behaviors. The tally sheets were kept for the first three weeks of the new school year. Each of the behaviors listed on the behavior tally sheet represents the lack of meeting behavior expectations. The results of these tallies are listed in Table 8 and support that these expectations were not being realized at the kindergarten site.

It was noted during the third week of school that the following negative behaviors escalated: does not share, interrupts, bothers/annoys others, does not respect other's belongings, is physically aggressive, does not resolve conflicts appropriately, does not show empathy, and does not help others. This could be due to the children becoming more comfortable with each other and with their teachers. As comfort levels grow, their impulsive behaviors increase.

During that same time period, the following behaviors improved: talking back, not accepting losing in a game, not showing respect, and saying please, thank you, and excuse me. This may be attributed to the intense focus on these behaviors in the Caring Able People (C.A.P.) program. Although there was improvement in some of the areas, the data provided evidence that the kindergarten students lack social competencies. Anecdotal records were another means of noting the lack of social competencies in the kindergarten children.

Table 8

Kindergarten Behavior Checklist, Number of Incidents of Problematic Behavior During the First 3 Weeks of School

Behaviors	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
Does not share	8	4	17
Always needs to be first	22	25	45
Does not take turns	5	15	31
Interrupts conversations	6	82	80
Talks back/defiant	22	11	13
Bothers/annoys others	47	49	62
Does not accept losing	7	7	3
Does not respect other's belongings	13	1	24
Is physically aggressive	10	15	23
Does not resolve conflicts appropriately	17	9	20
Does not show respect to to others	30	10	19
Does not say please, thank you etc.	320	277	246
Does not show empathy	0	13	16
Does not help others	19	21	26
Does not follow rules	43	83	75
Total:	626	622	700

Anecdotal Records

The anecdotal records taken by teachers further substantiated lack of social skills and use of good manners. During the first week of school, no incidents exhibiting lack of good manners or showing respect were severe enough to be recorded. Incidents were minor, such as not saying please and thank you, and were easily corrected by reminders. During the second week of school, three incidents were recorded. These involved two different students, a boy and a girl. One student, when asked to stop talking in line, refused and negatively responded to the teacher by saying "Put a melon in your mouth". In another incident, this same student kept making noises during story time. Despite being asked to stop making noises, the child continued and was therefore sent back to his table. He was told that he may rejoin the group when he felt he could follow directions; instead, he proceeded to quietly empty the other children's pencil cases at his table into a pile on the floor. The third incident involved a kindergarten girl. Upon realizing she forgot her show and tell, she stomped her feet, knocked over several chairs, and refused to participate in any activities for the rest of the school day.

During the third week of school, three more incidents occurred. The same boy from the previous week was reprimanded for running in the hall. After being approached by the teacher and taken by the hand back to the line, he responded with "no" and began kicking the teacher. A second incident, involving another boy, occurred when a student at his table told him not to use a marker for a printing paper. He responded by throwing his crayons at her. Upon the teacher's insistence, he apologized to the girl and then proceeded to sit in his chair and scoot out the door. The third incident, which involved this same student, happened when a classmate reminded him to put on his gym shoes. He told the boy he didn't have to and started spitting at him. The

aforementioned incidents support that the problem of a lack of social competencies does exist at the kindergarten level.

The assessment tools, which include the parent questionnaire, staff survey, behavior checklist, and anecdotal records, indicate the presence of negative social competencies in the kindergarten. In the following section, the probable causes of these behaviors will be examined.

Probable Causes

There are many factors that potentially contribute to social incompetency. This complex issue includes family situations, lack of empathy and caring, lack of self-discipline, no direct teaching of social skills, and the influence of the media. The pervasiveness of this problem is evidenced by the amount of research completed on this topic over the past 10 to 20 years. A broad range of potential causes from literature and the site are indicated.

Family Situation

Looking back through previous generations, one cannot help noticing the vast changes in the American family that have taken place since the end of World War II. Prior to the War, children were generally raised in a two parent nuclear family with the extended family ready to lend a supporting hand. The children effectively learned the traditions and lifestyles of their families, knew their role in the family, and grew up to become responsible productive adults (Glenn, 1988).

With the ending of World War II, the lifestyle of the American family changed drastically.

> In 1955, 60% of the households in the United States consisted of a working father, a housewife mother and two or more school age children. In 1980, that family unit was only 11% of our homes, and in 1985 it is 7%. (Hodgkinson, 1985, p. 3)

John Dewey (1963, p. 23) noted that "Many children suffer both instability in both family and community life. More mothers work outside the home, neighborhoods are less personal, schools are larger, and recreation is often passive." Goleman commented (as cited in O'Neil, 1996) that because today's parents need to work more hours than those parents in previous generations, they have less time to spend with their children. Glenn (1988) continues with this theme by noting that in the 1930's children spent as much as three or four hours a day interacting with the various members of their extended family. He goes on to say that today's children interact only a few minutes a day within the nuclear family, since the extended family, all living in the same neighborhood, no longer exists. Glenn (1988, p. 24) describes conversing between parent and children as being "one-way communications delivered in a negative tone: parent's warnings or reproaches to children for misbehavior". He further notes that children today do not generally work alongside their parents; consequently both the amount and quality of parent and child interaction have been reduced (Glenn, 1988).

Included in the parent questionnaire were six questions pertaining to family background information: marital status, birth order, attends daycare facility, has caregiver other than parent, child attended preschool, and approximate hours that child watches TV per week. As indicated in Table 9, 16% of the children's parents are divorced and 1% of the children are reared by a single parent. Furthermore, 16% of the students attend a daycare facility either part-time or full-time and 85% of the students have a caregiver other than a parent. However, this group may also include children that attend a daycare facility. The results of the kindergarten parent survey agree with the research delineated on both amount and quality of parent and child interaction.

As a result of less parent/child interaction and communication, the child's language development and ability to appropriately interact with teachers and other children has suffered

(Glenn, 1988). Children no longer have the parents as role models and thus do not know how to converse and interactively play together. This lack of parent as role models has negatively affected children's ability to converse and interact with kindergarten teachers and other children as well, thereby contributing to the lack of social skills. With the advent of more single parent households and more dual parent working households, parental influence on their children has become less and less and it is evident in their lack of empathy and lack of self-discipline.

Table 9

Kindergarten Parent Questionnaire, Family Background Questionnaire, August 27 and August 30, 1999

Family Background Information			
1. Marital status			
83% married	16% divorced	1% single	0% other
2. Attends daycare facility			
84% never	9% part-time	7% full-time	
3. Has caregiver other than parent			
15% never	39% sometime	29% part-time	17% full-time
4. Child attended preschool			
63% yes	37% no		
5. Approximate hours watching TV per week			
10% 0-7	23% 8-14	54% 15-21	13% 22 or more

Lack of Empathy and Self-Discipline

Empathy is one's ability to be sensitive to the perspectives and feelings of other people. Kreidler states that "students who won't or can't see things from another's point of view are likely to engage in behaviors that hurt" (1995, p. 26). There are many reasons for a lack of empathy among our youth. This society tends to be materialistic and self-indulgent, and lacks the time and energy to "focus" in on other people's problems. Berreth & Berman (1997, p. 24) offer the following explanation for the lack of empathy in our culture:

> Children today face an extremely challenging social environment. They experience growing economic disparity, the increasing acceptance of violence and abuse, a sense of disenchantment with government, and society's emphasis on self-interest and material goods. Too many young people feel hopeless, helpless, and powerless.
>
> Such feelings and experiences undermine children's ability to help others, to trust, and to see meaningful possibilities for their own future. Young people are easily seduced by a material culture that promotes instant gratification. The violence they see around them desensitizes them to their own pain and that of others.
>
> Although adults have created this environment, our children most vividly live out the contradictions between our words and our deeds. Children are the mirrors in which we can see our own reflection. (p. 24-25)

Self-discipline along with empathy are two skills that provide the foundation for moral behavior. "Self-discipline provides the ability to take action and delay or even forego gratification in order to remain committed to a set of values or goals" (Berreth & Berman, 1997, p. 24). "Many parents and teachers believe that the way to raise children to be moral is by punishing 'bad' behaviors and rewarding 'good' ones" (Kamii, 1984b, p. 11). Rewarding and

punishing children may have a short term effect but does nothing for the long term. Punishment may lead to one of three possible outcomes as noted by Kamii (1984b). Calculation of risk is one where the child who is punished will repeat the same act but trying not to be caught the next time. The second possible outcome is blind conformity. Compliant children become the perfect conformists because this ensures them security and respectability. When children become complete conformists, they need not make decisions anymore, and all they have to do is obey. Revolt, according to Kamii (1984b) is the third possible outcome. Some children after being angels for years, decide they are tired of pleasing parents and teachers all the time and decide to begin living for themselves. Sometimes, they may even become involved in acts of delinquency. "When discipline includes punishment, young children have difficulty understanding how to improve their behavior" (Greenberg, 1991, p. 8).

Rewards, while more pleasant than punishments, also discourage children from judging for themselves what is right or wrong (Kamii, 1984b). Children who do what they are supposed to do to get rewards are just as lacking in self-discipline as the children who are "good" only to avoid being punished. "Punishments, threats, lectures, bribes, and rewards might achieve immediate results but something is lost in the quick fix" (Dinwiddie, 1994, p. 18). The manners in which children are disciplined does not teach them self-control. "In fact, disciplining children the way we do may be more a cause than a cure for these unwanted behaviors" (Gordon, 1989, p. XXIX). Grusec & Amason state that "The socialization process should be deeper than just obedience to outside forces. It should encourage children's intrinsic acceptance of prosocial values" (as cited in Stone 1993).

It has been observed at the kindergarten site that children do not display empathy and lack self-discipline as noted in the teacher anecdotal records. Incidents were recorded that

substantiate their lack of control and their inability to respond appropriately to others. Too often the children are more concerned with receiving verbal praise or a tangible reward for good behavior as opposed to behaving appropriately because it is the right thing to do.

The system of reward and punishment has backfired. Children have not developed an internal locus of control to monitor their behavior. Without inner control, children are unable to behave appropriately for its own sake.

The teaching of social skills is neglected in the homes as well as in the schools. It has been observed at the kindergarten site, even with a social skills program in place, there is neither adequate nor faithful implementation of the teaching of social competencies.

Direct Teaching

"Schools have historically concentrated on boosting students' cognitive abilities. But developing students' emotional smarts, argues Daniel Goleman, is just as vital"(O'Neil, 1996, p. 6). Emotional intelligence, according to Goleman, (as cited in O'Neil, 1996) is knowing what your feelings are and using your feelings to make good decisions as well as the ability to manage distressing moods well and control impulses. "It's empathy; knowing what the people around you are feeling. And it's social skills--getting along well with other people, managing emotions in relationships, being able to persuade or lead others" (O'Neil, 1996, p. 6).

With working parents having less discretionary time to spend with their children and with children spending more time on computers and watching TV, there is much less time spent on the teaching of social skills within the family. "Until a cognitive emphasis was brought into the field in the late 1960's, social development was seen as the core of the nursery schools and kindergartens" (Wittmer & Honig, 1994, p. 4). According to Stone, (1993, p. 194) "Teachers need to be more aware of the importance of moral and social development among children".

However, Costa, Bellanca, and Fogarty (1992, p. 203) note that "in some programs, more and more academic content is forced at earlier and earlier ages to such a degree that this rich opportunity for social skill formation is eliminated". Gartrell further states "With disregard for young children's development, teachers were pressured to 'get students ready' for the academics of the next level--a pressure still felt by some early childhood teachers today" (1987, p. 56).

It is the consensus of the teachers at the kindergarten site that there is a lack of teaching of the social skills at the nursery school level. Instead of providing opportunities for social development, nursery schools are focusing on academics. The pressure in nursery schools to focus on academics has spiraled upward to the kindergarten level. At the kindergarten site, with the increasing emphasis on academics, there is a corresponding decrease in the amount of time spent on the teaching of social skills.

Costa, Bellanca, and Fogarty (1992, p. 202) present another factor in the lack of direct instruction in the classroom.

> In pursuit of our nation's desire to provide equal educational opportunity for all who come to the schoolhouse door, the desire to be free of religious influence inside the schoolhouse has caused our public schools to adopt a value-empty philosophy. This in turn has left most public schools without any focus on what is most important for students to learn. . . . In place of the traditional value focus, an "every man for himself" philosophy often dominates. In such an environment, young people become confused and unclear. In this state, they learn little about social responsibility, mutual caring, respect, or cooperation.

With no teaching of social skills at home and school, more problems are created. The focus on academic improvement and lack of family influence has left very little time, if any, to

devote to the teaching of prosocial behaviors. To further add to the problem of parents and schools not teaching social skills, the media is exacerbating the situation.

Media

The amounts of time children are spending watching television or sitting in front of a computer varies greatly. According to Oldenburg, (as cited in Smith, 1993) evidence from more than 3,000 research studies over two decades shows that children, roughly between the ages of 2 and 11, spend from three to four hours a day glued to the television set. A report funded by Pacific Life Foundation (1997) states that "each year children spend about 1,500 hours in front of the TV and 900 hours in the classroom; and that watching TV is the #1 after-school activity for 6 to 17 year olds" (p. 1). Unfortunately, the majority of these studies do not include the hours spent watching video cassettes and video games (OERI, 1999, p. 1).

At the kindergarten site, as indicated in Table 9, parents report 67% of the children view television 15 hours or more per week at home. This does not take into account the hours spent viewing TV at a daycare facility or with a caregiver. Considering that approximately 85% of the children are at a daycare facility or a caregiver, coupled with the amount of time spent viewing TV, there is very little time left for parent/child interaction. For many, the amount of television viewing isn't found as alarming as the type and content of the programs watched and the long lasting effects it can have on children. According to research by Golant & Golant (1990), problems on TV programs are often resolved in a shortened version from reality in a non-realistic way through the means of deception, manipulation, and violence. Many programs present an untrue account of real life situations by portraying relationships more glamorous than people actually encounter. Even more disturbing is that children not only are coming into contact with violence at an early age, but are learning to laugh at it! It is suggested that

aggression or sex role and racial stereotypes may be picked up through indiscriminate television watching. As a consequence, children are often learning and adopting violent, anti-social ways to resolve problems rather than solving them in a nonviolent and prosocial way (OERI, 1999).

> The aforementioned report funded by Pacific Life Foundation (1997) also noted that: Children who watch a large amount of violent programs tend to favor using aggression to resolve conflicts. The more violence children watch on TV the more likely they are to behave in aggressive or harmful ways toward others, become less sensitive to other's pain and suffering, be more fearful of the world around them, and increase their appetite for violence in entertainment and in real life. (p. 1)

With more and more studies reporting that children are viewing an excessive amount of television, there is a growing concern that children are not spending time with adults or other children. It seems that television is displacing activities such as playing with others, learning to build friendships, resolving real-life disagreements, and developing their own imaginations and abilities. Children are not learning to resolve conflict in an experiential, prosocial way with friends and parental guidance, but rather through viewing it in short 30 to 60 minute segments on TV (Golant & Golant, 1990).

The research cited coincides with the findings at the kindergarten site. Both document a lack of social competencies in students. Family situation, lack of empathy and self-discipline, lack of direct teaching, and the media are contributing causes. Chapter 3 addresses the different strategies suggested in literature for developing and improving social competencies.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

According to the literature reviewed, schools need to play an active role in developing social skills. In order to develop social skills, teachers need to develop and implement strategies that promote prosocial behavior. Direct teaching, cooperative learning, conflict resolution and family involvement are ways to accomplish this and need to be integrated into and woven throughout the curriculum.

Direct Teaching of Self-Concept and Character Education

Direct Teaching is a method of instruction in which the teacher selects and directs the learning tasks. The teacher maintains a central role during instruction and minimizes the amount of student involvement. This method maximizes student learning time and is designed to create a structured learning environment (Joyce & Weil, 1996). The content of direct teaching needs to encompass both self-concept and character education in order to insure that students are learning these social skills. "Our first task as educators is to be sure that the learning environment foster in students perceptions of themselves as capable, effective human beings" (Glenn, 1988, p. 53). Glenn (1988) goes on to say that if people do not have a positive concept of themselves and their ability to control their world, they will not be able to deal successfully with the frustrations they encounter. Those people with a positive self-image are able to confront a frustrating situation

and change it whereas people with a negative self-image tend to deal with frustration through rebellion and resistance or enter into depression, withdrawal, and passivity. Glenn (1988) believes that it is critical to remember that perception is the key to attitude, motivation, and behavior and that teachers, through the model of direct teaching, can help children develop a positive self-concept by helping them interpret the various challenges encountered in their environment. He uses the following EIAG formula as a guideline:

1. Experience (E): Become aware of experiences, both negative and positive, in the person's life.

2. Identify (I): Help the person identify the significant elements or outcome of a particular event. "What happened? What did you see? What are you feeling? What was the most important thing?"

3. Analyze (A): Help the person analyze why aspects of the event were important. "Why was that significant to you? Why do you think it happened?" However, since children are used to having teachers and parents using the question Why? against them, in some cases it might be less threatening to say, "What made that seem important to you? What were you trying to do? What caused you to feel that way?"

4. Generalize (G): Help the person discern from the experience a single principle that can be used in similar situations. "How can you use this information in the future? How can you do it differently next time for different results? What do you need to repeat if you want to achieve similar results again?" (Glenn, 1988, p. 55-56)

Along with Glenn, Hendrick (1992) believes that a major responsibility of the teacher is to teach children how to make responsible decisions concerning their own lives and the lives of other people. This can be done by taking advantage of the "teachable moments." If two children

are arguing over the same book, this is the time the teacher steps in to guide the children through acceptable alternate ways to resolve the situation. The teacher needs to stop the entire class and elicit ideas and suggestions on how to solve the problem. If the children are unable to resolve the problem on their own, the teacher may intervene and offer limited choices. Perhaps the children may share the book or they may agree on an amount of time that each may use the book. It is important to point out how their actions affect others since this sensitizes them to the feelings of others.

> Every time we present children with true choices and honor their decisions about those choices, we foster their ability to take independent action. This is an essential skill for the citizens in a democracy. . . . this kind of empowerment builds self-confidence--self-confidence that is, basically, trust in one's own judgment. Bit by bit, over a period of years, these opportunities help independent people develop--people who can make up their own minds. (Hendrick, 1992, p.51-52)

Hendrick (1992) continues with the necessity for teachers to foster the growth of autonomy by encouraging children to want to do things on their own and not be afraid to try. Besides encouraging making choices and acting independently, teachers must help to build competence by helping each child to acquire skills. As competency is developed, self-confidence is increased. In addition to addressing positive self-concept under direct instruction, teachers also need to provide for guidance in character education.

> Character education means helping students understand, through experience, that what they value matters and that living these virtues lends meaning and richness to their own lives. Young people begin to see that their actions and choices create the world as it is and as it will be. When students grasp the positive differences they can make in the

> world, they grow in responsibility, respect, self-discipline, integrity, empathy—all the virtues we wish to see. (Berreth & Berman, 1997, p. 27)

In order to successfully implement a program in self-concept and character education, the school district and surrounding community must value and be willing to incorporate this type of learning into the regular school curriculum. The school district must also be willing to provide funds as well as release time for staff development. A major concern is the time that will be taken away from the teaching of the academic core curriculum. Both the community and the district need to realize that learning will be facilitated as a result of the growth in social skills. Direct teaching is a powerful tool for teaching social skills and these skills can be further enhanced through cooperative learning.

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is an instructional method. It uses cooperative groups as a tool. The groups are formally assigned and may include two to five students of different ability, skill, motivation, gender, and racial origin working together to achieve a single learning goal (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991). At the elementary level, roles within the group are the checker, encourager, reader, and recorder. These roles, along with their responsibilities, need to be directly taught through the use of illustrated charts, modeling, and cooperative story characters. A bulletin board, displaying the appropriate social behaviors expected during the group interactions, should be visible as a constant reference and reinforcer. For cooperative learning to be successful, teachers need to be trained in how to use cooperative learning as a critical instructional tool. It is also necessary that they have the opportunity to revisit, renew, and restructure their techniques through staff development along with the encouragement and support of administration and peers.

> A quiet revolution has been taking place in corporate America as a result of a new leadership style, called participative management. Participative management involves a radical redistribution and sharing of power within an organization. Among teachers, school administrators, and teacher educators, there is a small and growing recognition that student participation in decision making is a key element in schools with good discipline (i.e. Strong self-discipline). (Gordon, 1989, p. 138-139)

Limited attention, however, has been given to cooperative behaviors in early childhood education because of the belief that young children are too egocentric. Goffin (1987) went so far as to say that preschoolers and kindergartners cannot see another person's viewpoint because of their limited perspective-taking ability. Therefore, they are unable to do cooperative activities. However, research suggests that young children are capable of seeing things someone else's way. Damon's study, (as cited in Goffin, 1987), contends that perspective-taking is not determined by a stage of development but is a cognitive strategy that children use with different degrees of success depending on the situation's demands. Damon's interpretation implies that the more opportunities children have to consider the view of others, the more successful they will become at resolving social problems and the more they will benefit from others during social encounters. Berreth and Berman (1997, p. 25) support Damon's contention by stating that "we must provide children with age appropriate opportunities to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. Even very young children can participate in class meetings to discuss rules and moral values." By incorporating cooperative meeting management techniques, McCabe and Rhoades (1992) believe that individual responsibility is enhanced. Berreth and Berman (1997) add that when children are included in formulating the rules and consequences, they develop a sense of ownership and responsibility. Furthermore, Henley (1997) states that one must:

> Develop classroom rules together so that the rules are initiated by students rather than forced upon them. Use cooperative learning and peer tutoring so that students can help others and feel useful. Hold discussions to troubleshoot problems. Honest dialogue about feelings communicates a sense of community and shared priorities. Sharing the responsibility of classroom housekeeping teaches the importance of contributing and giving something back to the class. (p. 45)

These findings support the appropriateness of meaningful cooperative activities and are consistent with what teachers, who value cooperative activities, promote in their classrooms. In order for teachers to establish a cooperative learning classroom, one in which cooperative groups are used to improve self-esteem, responsibility, and achievement, teachers need to provide guidance and promote a sense of community. "Guidance teaches children the life skills they need as citizens of a democracy: respecting others and one's self, working together in groups, solving problems, using words, expressing strong emotions in acceptable ways, making decisions ethically and intelligently" (Wittmer & Honig, 1994, p. 9). In order to demonstrate that these qualities are to be valued and respected, Murphy (1997) states that teachers need to acknowledge acts of kindness and compassion and should continually use words such as courtesy, cooperation, kindness, and honesty. McCabe and Rhoades (1992) note that in developing a cohesive cooperative classroom, the teacher needs to set standards and decide which behaviors are acceptable and unacceptable. For a cooperative learning classroom to be successful, acceptable ways of resolving conflicts need to be taught.

Conflict Resolution

Children need to work out their feelings about power and control. Arnow (1995) contends that children today are more aggressive when resolving conflicts. Children develop

their own ideas and strategies for dealing with conflict by what they see and hear around them. Thus, "a teacher must clarify his or her values and develop strong convictions about them to make conflict management work in the classroom" (Wickert, 1989, p. 63). Strategies for managing conflicts are absolutely necessary for classroom communities to be successful (Honig & Wittmer, 1996). Research indicates that teachers are now facilitating conflict management and other guidance methods because they find it works better than punishment (Kamii, 1984b).

> The objective is to teach children to solve problems rather than to punish children for having problems they cannot solve. The outcomes of guidance-the ability to get along with others, solve problems using words, express strong feelings in acceptable ways-are the goals-for citizens of a democratic society. (Gartrell, 1997, p. 40)

Dinwiddie (1994) defines conflict resolution as a process involving cooperative negotiation to achieve mutually acceptable (win-win) solutions. Conflict resolution with young children is usually called social problem solving (Dinwiddie, 1994).

Although various researchers describe the social problem-solving process a little differently, it is necessary to follow certain basic steps. Gordon (1989) lists the basic steps as:

1. identify and define problem
2. generate alternative solutions
3. evaluate the alternative solutions
4. decision making
5. implement the decision
6. follow-up evaluation. (p. 169)

According to Dinwiddie (1994), teachers must develop specific attitudes to facilitate social problem solving. She feels it is necessary to develop the attitude that conflict is okay, be

objective and avoid blame, and to remember that the goals of the process are more important than the solutions (Dinwiddie, 1994).

Besides the teachers' development and formation of convictions and attitudes of conflict management, the children need opportunities to learn and practice problem solving. In order to provide these learning experiences, "Children should be involved in a variety and complexity of play situations so that they have many opportunities to develop and fine tune their strategies for making good choices" (Fayden, 1997, p. 16). Group meetings and discussions on how to be nice and still feel angry, and role playing what one may do to express one's self, are suggestions by Logan (1998) and Newman (1993). Teaching children to use words and "Talk it out" is also supported by Eaton (1997). He continues by saying that children who have learned to use language to resolve their conflicts are less likely to get physical when they are angry and feelings are boiling over (Eaton, 1997).

Literature is another valuable tool in teaching problem-solving. Children can strengthen their interpersonal skills by role-playing characters in stories that depict solving conflicts. The book Making Friends by Fred Rogers illustrates different situations in which children experience a conflict and offers ways on how to resolve these conflicts. Children can readily identify with the experiences that are portrayed in these realistic photos. The narrative below each picture provides a good starting point to elicit conversation on ways to resolve the particular conflict. Children then may dramatize these situations and practice alternatives to solve the conflict.

Children learn acceptable ways to express feelings and fulfill desires when practicing social problem solving. "To do this, they need to have some experience observing or participating in real (not role-playing) conflict resolution events. Even when a conflict is not resolved but is managed thoughtfully and with respect and caring for all parties, the experience

helps build faith needed to face the next conflict" (Logan, 1998, p. 24). It is easy for children to maintain interest in this kind of activity because it directly involves them.

When children are allowed the opportunity to experience and practice resolution strategies, they are empowered to take responsibility for their own choices. This builds their self-confidence and children learn to trust their own judgment.

> Children in our society are bombarded with conflict, whether in their own experience or in the media. Unless we make an effort to teach them positive ways of negotiating conflict, they will learn ways haphazardly via TV, videos and movies, which usually emphasize violent solutions to conflict. Learning social problem solving in the early years can hold our children and our world in good stead in the future. (Dinwiddie, 1994, p. 19)

The following strategies can be used with the instructional models of direct teaching, cooperative learning, and conflict resolution.

Strategies for Teaching Self-Concept and Character Education

There are a variety of strategies that teachers can incorporate into their teaching to include self-concept and character education in the curriculum. Some strategies that may be included in the curriculum are positive discipline, role play, bibliotherapy, friendship groups, and opportunities for practice.

Positive discipline. Positive discipline involves permitting children to make choices between two acceptable options. According to Stephens (as cited in Eaton, 1997), limited choices help children enhance their independence and enable the adult to guide the children to an acceptable alternative. Children that have choices are likely to cooperate because they feel they have control of the situation. Positive discipline involves the children in all

classroom decision making. As children experience the process of discussion, they practice sharing, listening and helping each other. These are important factors in developing good prosocial interaction.

> By using positive discipline, teachers model compassion and patience. By being treated with gentleness and respect, children learn respect for themselves and others. . . . The goal in using discipline is to guide children's behavior in such a way that they will internalize expectations and develop the self-control that they need to function securely in life. (Eaton, 1997 p. 44-46)

Kamii (1984b) gives two reasons to explain why decision making by children is so important:

> First, children cannot find out about the wisdom of one decision if they do not have opportunities to compare its consequence with the consequences of a bad decision. . . . Second, children can become responsible only when they are truly responsible for the decisions they make. As long as decisions are made by somebody else, children are not responsible for them because all they have to do is obey. (p. 13)

Thus, children also need to experience the natural and or logical consequences of their behavior. For example, if a child refuses to do a directed activity such as cleaning up and putting away his supplies, the student may not proceed onto the next activity, whatever that activity may be: lining up for drinks, going to gym, music or library, or doing centers. This is the natural consequence of the child's actions. "Inadequate social learning occurs when adults shame children, coerce them, or fail to make adult expectations clear to them" (Eaton, 1997, p. 45). However, it is just as detrimental for adults to rescue children from every predicament in which

they find themselves by not enforcing the consequences of the child's behavior (Eaton, 1997). As well as using positive discipline, another way to develop character education is role playing.

Role play. Role playing is another strategy of guiding children in character education. Feshbach (as cited in Wittmer & Honig, 1994) reported that two training techniques that promoted understanding in children of other children's feelings were role playing and maximizing the perceived similarity between the observer and the stimulus person. The latter is what anti-bias education is about. Children should be encouraged to act out stories dramatically. Children who act out different stories become aware of how the characters feel. Switching roles gives children a different perspective on the feelings and motives of each character.

In this same theme, Kreidler (1995) encourages children to role play words that express different feelings. At the kindergarten level, it is more appropriate to have children act out their feelings without using words. He further suggests that the teacher present the class with a variety of situations (Kreidler, 1995). Again, in kindergarten, the teacher may ask the children to act out the feelings of happy, sad, angry, etc. by using facial expressions and body movement.

Fayden (1997) discusses the importance of children having the opportunity to institute sociodramatic play. "Sociodramatic play takes place when two or more children engage in make-believe and use a variety of activities to carry out their play" (Fayden, 1997, p. 16). There are many opportunities for teachers to reinforce the desired behavior through sociodramatic play. At the kindergarten level, the children enjoy role playing and acting out situations. For example, to practice saying excuse me, the teacher sets up the scenario such as one student pushing past another student to get by. The children act out the impulsive unacceptable behavior. The class then discusses what words could be used in this situation to teach and reinforce good manners. Different scenarios are set up to give children many

opportunities to dramatize prosocial skills. Another strategy which allows for dramatizing and developing prosocial behaviors is bibliotherapy.

Bibliotherapy. Honig and Wittmer (1996) suggest the use of bibliotherapy which is a method of incorporating children's literature in reading activities to enhance empathy and caring. They suggest choosing children's literature for prosocial themes and characters that provide altruistic models. Spangler (1997) states that "teachers need to work with the librarian so that a collection of books on each month's theme will be ready for use" (p. 77). According to Bellanca (1992), it is necessary to weave social skills lessons throughout the curriculum. As the children examine the characters in a story, they can draw life lessons from the ways in which the literary characters solve problems and interact with others. The Little Red Hen, Cleversticks and Bear, Your Manners Are Showing are examples of age appropriate literature that can be used in kindergarten.

The Little Red Hen, as retold by Brenda Parkes and Judith Smith, is an excellent story that depicts the consequences when there is a lack of cooperation among the characters. The little Red Hen makes repeated requests to her friends for help in planting, watering, threshing the wheat and taking it to the mill, but to no avail. The other characters go so far as to refuse to help her bake the bread. Yet once they smell the fragrance of the baking bread, they are more than willing to help her eat the bread. Of course, the little Red Hen refuses to share her bread. This story easily lends itself to be dramatized with the children taking on the roles of the various characters. Furthermore, children can go a step further by dramatizing alternative endings as they implement cooperative behavior.

Cleversticks by Bernard Ashley deals with the issues of self-esteem and children's need to achieve, to conform, and to belong. Ling Sung is a kindergarten student who believes that he

is unable to do anything correctly. The other children in his class repeatedly receive praise from the teacher whereas he is always making mistakes. The other children are all good at something with the exception of him. One day as the cookies are passed around, he drops his plate and the cookies break into small pieces. He picks up two paint brushes and uses them like chopsticks as he picks up the cookies and eats them. The other students, as well as the teachers, are very impressed with his ability to use chopsticks and he is given the job of teaching everyone at school how to use chopsticks. Then Ling Sung asks the other children to show him how to do the things that they do best. This book is an excellent vehicle for emphasizing the differences among children and that all of us are good at something, just as all of us need help with other things. As a follow up project, the children could each think of something they are good at and something they need help with. Each student could team up with another student and help each other as the children in the book did.

A very simple story for teaching and reinforcing the use of good manners is Bear, Your Manners Are Showing by Kathleen A. Meyer. In the story, Bear has a problem remembering to use his good manners. Mom stamps please, thank you, excuse me, and I'm sorry on each of his paws in order to help him recall these "magic words" at school. As various situations arise throughout the day, Bear initially forgets to use his good manners thereby experiencing negative reactions from the others. However, once he is reminded by the "magic words" on his paws to use his good manners, he experiences positive results. This book provides the opportunity to use Bear as a reference during the year when children display rude behavior by asking them "what would Bear do?" The use of friendship groups provides another opportunity to develop prosocial behavior.

Friendship groups. Williamson (1990) suggests that by forming friendship groups, the children will learn those social skills necessary to develop and maintain friends. He states that some children are unable to get along in a group situation and have difficulty making and maintaining friendships. He goes on to say that group formats are the most effective way to teach social skills. Often these skill-building groups are led by the school social worker, although occasionally the occupational therapists and speech therapists need to become involved. Sure & Spivak (1980) found that children as young as preschoolers can be taught to interact and negotiate with others through group social skills building. Participating in group activities in order to make friends has also been effective at the elementary level according to Oden and Asher (1997). Roger Weissberg (as cited in Elias & Weissberg, 1990) designed a two year program for relationship skills building at the middle school level. The learning of social skills through friendship groups can be ameliorated when children have varied opportunities for guided practice.

Opportunity for practice. According to Noddings (1992), in order to develop social competencies in children, one must provide opportunities for practice. Noddings (1992) goes on to say that at the elementary level, schools have been able to provide time and programs for social skill development. It is in the secondary school curriculum that programs need to be implemented and curriculum reformed to allow for time and teaching of social skills (Noddings, 1992). Benson, Galbraith, & Espland (1998) assert that teachers should expect students to act responsibly. They further recommend acknowledging and affirming appropriate behavior and imposing clear and reasonable consequences for inappropriate behavior. They believe students should be given real responsibilities in the classroom and the school while teachers monitor (Espland, 1998). Wittmer and Honig (1994) state that teachers need to label and identify

prosocial behaviors such as , "You let her use your glue because you like to help others". Just saying "that's right" or "that's fine" to a child is not specific enough because it does not explain the desired behavior. They further suggest that educators refrain from overusing external rewards and that commenting on positive behaviors actually is more apt to help children internalize prosocial responses than using external rewards such as stickers or candy. Williamson (1990) supports labeling and identifying prosocial behaviors.

> An evaluation and praise session at the end of a difficult situation is essential for most children. It helps them integrate their experience and be more aware of their own behavior. . . . By evaluating their behavior, we give them new and positive things to say to themselves about themselves. They will begin to see themselves as more competent and will gain confidence in their coping skills. The more they are able to see themselves in this way, the more likely they will be to act appropriately in the future. (p. 182)

Teachers must always be prepared to take advantage of those teachable moments that often occur when one least expects it. Professionals who work with young children often find that flexibility can be the key to life's best lessons. Essential for children to progress in their learning and practicing social problem-solving is the parent component.

Family Communication

Murphy (1997) believes that parents and teachers are equal partners in educating the child. Gartrell (1987) suggests that

> teachers start building partnerships at the beginning of the year. Through positive notes home, phone calls, visits, meetings, and conferences, she builds relationships. It is her job to build partnerships even with hard-to-reach parents. When the invitations are sincere, many parents gradually do become involved. (p. 41)

Coleman (1997) suggests home visits when parents are uncomfortable or unable to come to school. To reinforce Gartrell's suggestions, Benson, Galbraith, and Espeland (1998) recommend that educators also personally contact the family at least once during the school year and publish a monthly class newsletter to keep parents informed. In addition, teachers need to "talk with parents about their standards for their children's conduct, and share with them your standards for student conduct. Find common ground and support each other's efforts" (Benson, 1998, p. 75).

Research indicates that the difference between a good school and a great school is the degree to which parents are involved. Arnow (1995) sees this as a key factor in building substantial school-to-community relationships, improving multicultural relationships and curbing school violence.

Coleman (1997) suggests a three-step process for developing a philosophical statement of family involvement. The first step involves determining what type of family involvement program the school should follow. The second step involves deciding what themes should be addressed. The third step involves creating the philosophical statement which serves to build a common ground of support between families and schools.

> Developing a mindset of seeking common ground reflects a positive philosophy of family-school relations that portrays parents and teachers as colleagues in promoting the best interests of young children. Parents and teachers who identify a common ground for family-school cooperation are better able to maintain an open dialogue so that energies are directed toward identifying opportunities for families and schools to work together in supporting the development and education of young children. (Coleman, 1997, p. 21)

As most of the literature suggests, it is essential that teachers and parents work together to

educate the child. Mason (as cited in Arnow, 1995, p. 26) quotes Abraham Lincoln, "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world".

Upon reviewing the literature, many suggestions are made for improving the social skills of children. Of the many solutions cited in literature, the following were selected to be implemented: direct instruction of social skills, development of cooperative learning activities, implementation of techniques in conflict resolution, and improvement of child/parent communication. Not all of the strategies suggested in the literature reviewed will be used. Focus will be on the strategies that are age appropriate and applicable to the targeted kindergarten curriculum.

Project Objectives and Process

As a result of direct teaching, cooperative learning activities, conflict resolution techniques, and the increase of home/school communication during the period of August 1999 to December 1999, the targeted kindergarten classes will demonstrate an increase in prosocial behaviors as measured by teacher anecdotal records, behavior checklists, and post staff/parent surveys.

In order to improve prosocial behaviors the following procedures are necessary:

1. Direct instruction of social skills
2. Development of cooperative learning activities
3. Implementation of techniques in conflict resolution
4. Improvement of child/parent communication.

Action Plan for Intervention

The following steps will be taken to implement the intervention:

I. Pre-intervention attitudes and performance levels

- Who Parents and teachers
- What Complete surveys assessing social skills
- When First week of school (August, 1999)
- Why Determine base line to measure improvements or growth

II. Direct instruction of social skills

- Who Teacher researcher
- What 1. Hand Stop chart
  2. Be A Good Listener chart
  3. T-chart "Looks Like/Sounds Like"
  4. Role play
  5. Literature to create mini lessons
  6. Model social skills
  7. CAP bulletin board depicting monthly theme
  8. Snack time to practice good manners
- When First three weeks of school

  Ten minutes daily and periodically reviewed throughout the semester
- Why Identify and teach expected behaviors

  Develop social skills

III. Cooperative Groups

- Who Teacher researcher will plan for students
- What 1. Arrangement of room
  2. Set up groups
  3. Assign roles

4. Cooperation chart

5. Cooperative activities/strategies

PMI

Task groups

- When At least twice a week (40 minutes total time)
- Why 1. Develop social skills

2. Unite teams

3. Practice problem solving

4. Practice decision making

5. Practice collaboration

6. Promote learning

IV. Conflict Resolution

- Who Teacher researcher and students
- What 1. Implement CAP (Caring Able Person) program

2. Literature

3. Steps to resolve conflicts

EIAG Formula (experience, identify, analyze, generalize)

4. T-Chart on anger

5. Talking stick

6. Sing songs (ex. "If you're mad.....")

7. Role play/model

8. Sociodramatic play

9. CAP pledge

10. Center activities (games)

11. Teachable moments

- When Daily 10 minutes and reviewed as needed throughout semester
- Why Provide opportunities to:

1. Practice resolving conflicts
2. Learn appropriate ways of dealing with anger
3. Learn how to be assertive (not aggressive)
4. Transfer from structured setting to natural setting

V. Improve child/parent, school/home communication

- Who Student, parent, teacher researcher
- What 1. CAP letter to parents from principal
  2. Book depicting monthly theme
  3. LEA (language experience activity) on monthly theme
  4. Activities with family to promote and practice social skills
  5. Class newsletter
- When Monthly: CAP letter, LEA, CAP book, and family activity

  Weekly newsletter
- Why 1. Increase communication between parent and child
  2. Increase communication between parent and school
  3. Develop social skills

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess improvement in prosocial behavior, parents will repeat the social skills survey. The kindergarten staff will repeat the staff survey. The teacher researcher will assess the

effects of the interventions through the student behavior checklist and the review of anecdotal records. Both pre and post data collection will be conducted using this assessment plan.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to increase prosocial behaviors and teach conflict resolution strategies. Direct teaching, cooperative learning activities, conflict resolution techniques and improved home/school communication were implemented in order to accomplish desired changes. These strategies were taught during formal and informal instructional settings over a five-month period. Home/school communication was increased during the same five-month period.

The curriculum was formally introduced at the beginning of the day during whole group time in the kindergarten classroom. Guided practice opportunities were provided in whole group time and in cooperative groups throughout the week. To measure the outcome of direct instruction of these strategies, data was collected during the first 3 weeks of school and during weeks 18 through 20 of the school year. An action plan was devised to implement the necessary intervention.

The action plan included direct teaching of social skills, cooperative grouping, conflict resolution, and improving child/parent and home/school communication. Supplemental lessons and materials were used throughout the intervention period. Direct teaching was the first part of the instructional program.

Direct Teaching

The first week of school was devoted to getting to know each other, learning each other's names, and establishing a warm and nurturing climate in the classroom. The children were

taught the song, "Making Friends Today" and played the "Friendship Game" to facilitate learning each other's names. The following books were read: School Is Fun, Clifford's Good Deed, Making Friends, The Berenstein Bears Go to School, and Vera's First Day of School. The books used throughout the intervention are listed in Appendix D. At the end of the week, each child illustrated and dictated what they wanted to do in kindergarten. These papers were sorted according to the children's interest and a class mission statement was written.

In week two, the CAP acronym and what it means to be a caring, able person were discussed. At the beginning of the week, the song "Higgety, Biggety Bumble Bee" was taught to reinforce the learning of each other's names. The Caring Able People (CAP) pledge was introduced and practiced. Each morning this week, the principal and office staff modeled saying the Pledge of Allegiance and the CAP pledge (see Appendix E) over the school intercom. After saying the pledge, the monthly theme (see Appendix F) was highlighted with suggestions on how to be a caring, able person. Furthermore, the principal began her monthly visit to the classroom to read a story that focused on the theme for that month. The children wore their CAP hats. After reading the story, the principal lead a discussion on ways the children could display appropriate social behavior. For example, in September she read a book titled Listen, Buddy and discussed ways to be a good listener.

The CAP flag was hung over the CAP board that focused on each month's theme. A handclap signal was taught and practiced as a cue to stop talking and focus on the teacher. At this time, the Be A Listener chart (see Appendix G) was presented to teach the children good listening skills. The Be A Listener chart was hung on the CAP board as a focus for the month of September and later used as a reference throughout the year. The talking stick was another strategy for teaching the children to talk one at a time and not interrupt when someone else is speaking. Only the child holding the stick could speak. For another child to be able to talk, the speaker had to pass the talking stick to that child. The Be A Listener chart proved to be an invaluable tool as a reference for good listening; thus the talking stick was never implemented as part of the plan.

In week three, the T-chart was made to use as a visual reference of what good listening "looks like" and "sounds like". Books on caring and sharing were read to generate a discussion to guide the children in writing the caring and sharing rules for the classroom. As the books were read, the children role-played both acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. To make caring and sharing behaviors more obvious to the children, the phrase "Caught a CAP" was used. When a teacher witnessed a desired behavior, all activities were stopped; the teachable moment was taken advantage of to describe and explain why this was an example of a caring and sharing behavior. At the end of the week, the students illustrated and dictated a sentence reflecting on when they were a CAP.

Week four was used to review and reinforce the Be A Listener chart. The job of a Caring Able Helper was introduced. The helper at each table wore a CAP badge as a visual for the other children at the table. The role and duties of the helper were explained. It was emphasized that the helper not be bossy, but continue to model caring behaviors. The book entitled Blueberry Bears was read and followed by a discussion on caring and sharing.

Direct teaching of social skills focusing on each monthly theme, Be a Listener, Say "Please, Thank You and Excuse Me", Display Sharing and Caring Behaviors, Help Others, and Get Along With Others, was continued throughout the 20-week intervention. Literature was included to highlight and reinforce the themes and to provide for class discussions and role-play. As each new theme was introduced, previously taught skills were reviewed. Following the direct instruction of good listening skills, cooperative learning activities were introduced.

Cooperative Grouping

The physical set-up of the kindergarten classroom was conducive for implementing cooperative grouping. Four tables, consisting of five to six students per table, were the designated base groups. At the kindergarten level, the majority of activities were done in task groups with roles changing with each activity. Most often the roles consisted of a cutter, gluer, and checker. Many activities used the pair/share strategy in which two students exchanged information, decided on a talker for that activity, and reported back to the group.

The first lesson on cooperative learning was taught using the Cooperate chart (see Appendix H) prior to partnering the children. The desired behaviors of working in a group were explained and discussed with the children, and the chart was displayed as a visual reminder. Then the five rules for working in a group were practiced with a partner. After their first experience using the pair/share strategy, the children were taught to use Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down as a reflection on the cooperative activity.

Lessons using cooperative grouping were implemented at least twice a week. Cooperative grouping was used to provide opportunities for the children to develop necessary social skills for working in groups as well as uniting teams. Once assigned to their group, the students had to decide on the role each member of the group would assume as well as how the task would be accomplished. This strategy allowed for practice in problem solving, decision-making, collaboration, and ultimately, provided for learning. As children work together, conflicts arise. It was necessary to intervene and teach children appropriate ways to resolve their conflicts.

Conflict Resolution

Listening to others is the most important skill needed in learning to resolve conflict. The CAP program along with cooperative grouping, implemented in the first weeks of school, was designed to teach prosocial behaviors. The CAP program allowed for direct teaching of prosocial skills and how to resolve conflicts; while the cooperative grouping gave them opportunities to practice those skills needed to resolve conflicts. Besides practicing in group activities, as situations arose, those teachable moments were utilized to transfer the learned skills to real-life situations. The EIAG formula was used by the teacher to guide discussions when a conflict situation presented itself. This formula provided for addressing the Experiences, Identifying the resulting feelings, Analyzing alternative behaviors, and Generalizing appropriate solutions for future conflicts. To further provide opportunities for practicing prosocial behaviors, games were set up in centers for children to apply the learned strategies. It was anticipated that sociodramatic play also be implemented for further practice in resolving conflicts. However,

because of time constraints and a limited budget, the stage and puppets for sociodramatic play were not purchased.

The chart If You're Mad (see Appendix I) was introduced and the four options of what to do when having a conflict were taught. This chart was posted on the CAP bulletin board as a visual reminder and was referred to when a conflict arose in any situation. To reinforce the learning of the four options, the chart was put to music. The song was taught by the teachers to the kindergarten classes.

Stories were selected that involved themes of conflict. When reading a book, before the conflict was resolved in the story, the children were given the opportunity to discuss the various ways in which the conflict could be resolved. After reading the story, similar scenarios were presented. The children, working with a partner, shared and role-played an appropriate choice on how they could resolve the conflict. In order to provide for transfer from the structured classroom setting to a real-life setting, it was necessary to improve the child/parent and school/home communication.

Home/School Communication

A monthly newsletter was sent home to introduce the monthly CAP theme. Family activities to promote and practice social skills and additional readings were suggested. Both school wide and age appropriate community events were highlighted.

In addition, a classroom weekly CAP newsletter (see Appendix J) was sent home to the parents reminding them of the monthly theme and informing them of class activities. At the end of each month, the children illustrated and dictated what they did to apply the monthly skill. These artifacts provided a catalyst for connection between child and parent.

Direct teaching, cooperative learning, conflict resolution, and increased home/school communication have been the underlying foundation of the intervention. Four forms of assessment were used to evaluate its successfulness.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

The four forms of assessment used to track the progress of the students included a parent questionnaire with an added open-ended question, a staff survey, a student behavior checklist, and recorded teacher observations. The first tool used was the parent questionnaire.

Parent Questionnaire

A parent questionnaire was completed at the start of the school year and again at the end of the intervention (see Appendix K). Of the 70 questionnaires sent home to parents, there was an 83% response rate. The comparison of the results between the pre and post questionnaires is shown in Tables 10 and 11. Table 10, odd numbered questions, addressed positive prosocial behavior. In this area it was hoped that the children would display prosocial behaviors more often, and thus reflect an increase in the percentages in the often column. As indicated, the comparison of the pre/post questionnaires in Table 10, all areas, except for waits for his/her turn to speak, which declined 3%, showed a positive increase in prosocial behavior. For example, the pre questionnaire indicated that 75% of the children shared toys often; in the post questionnaire, 83% of the children often displayed the prosocial behavior of being able to share. The areas showing the most substantial increase were: follows the rules, saying please, thank you, excuse me, I'm sorry, and conflict resolution. These showed at least a 10% increase or higher in prosocial behavior. Follows directions the first time, showed no change in the post questionnaire.

The even numbered questions addressing negative behaviors are in Table 11. In this area the post column should show an increase indicating that more children were not displaying negative behaviors. For instance, the pre questionnaire indicated that 3% never want all the attention; the post questionnaire indicated that after the intervention, 6% of the children never want all the attention. Most areas showed substantial improvement, with the exception of talks back to parent, which varied only 1%. The only area showing a decline was whines or complains which showed a 3% decrease. In conjunction with the post parent questionnaire, an open-ended question (see Appendix L) was addressed for parent feedback on the intervention.

Table 10

Comparison of Pre/Post Kindergarten Parent Questionnaire, Positive Social Behaviors

Odd Numbered Questions		August 1999 Pre	February 2000 Post
1. Shares toys and other belongings		75%	83%
3. Willing to take turns		71%	76%
(playing games, standing in line, playing with toys)			
5. Waits for his/her turn to speak		37%	34%
7. Follows the rules		66%	80%
9. Follows directions the first time		52%	52%
11. Accepts decisions made by adults		69%	74%
13. Regularly uses the following words:			
	Please	57%	76%
	Thank you	63%	74%
	Excuse me	53%	61%
	I'm sorry	46%	60%
15. Invites other children to play		61%	70%
17. Stands up for his/her rights		29%	46%
19. Resolves conflict by			
	Talking it out	30%	38%
	Leaving the situation	21%	22%
	Not getting physical	3%	3%

Table 11

Comparison of Pre/Post Kindergarten Parent Questionnaire, Negative Social Behaviors

Even Numbered Questions	August 1999 Pre	February 2000 Post
2. Important to always be first	4%	9%
4. Wants all the attention	3%	6%
6. Talks back to parents, teachers or caregiver	24%	25%
8. Must have his/her own way	6%	12%
10. Does not accept losing in a game	4%	16%
12. Whines or complains	10%	7%
14. Bothers or annoys others	19%	21%
16. Destroys or takes things that belong to others	52%	57%
18. Is physically aggressive	35%	37%
20. Does not show respect to adults and other children	27%	38%

Open Ended Question

Seventy letters were sent home to parents and 67 were returned. Of the ones returned, four did not address the question and three responded they saw no change in their child's behavior. The remaining 60 responses were all positive with parents commenting that they saw an improvement in their child's social skills. For example, several parents commented on noticing an improvement in their child's being more willing to share and take turns with his/her siblings. An overwhelming amount of parents stated that the program was responsible for improving their child's use of good manners, especially saying please, thank you, and excuse me. Many parents said they particularly liked having the reference of being a CAP without having to yell or have a confrontation over an incident. Furthermore, some parents appreciated how the

program enhanced what they were already teaching at home. Finally, parents pointed out the need for constant reinforcement. They felt that as each new monthly skill was introduced, the children became lax in using the prior month's skill. These findings were supported by the staff survey.

Table 12

Comparison of Pre/Post Staff Survey Results

Pre Displayed Behaviors	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom
Please/thank you	11%	78%	11%
Excuse me/I'm sorry	6%	61%	33%
Share	28%	72%	0%
Take turns	17%	78%	5%
Show empathy	6%	72%	22%
Reconcile differences	0%	61%	39%
Help others	22%	78%	0%
Post Displayed Behaviors	**Usually**	**Sometimes**	**Seldom**
Please/thank you	90%	10%	0%
Excuse me/I'm sorry	60%	30%	10%
Share	70%	30%	0%
Take turns	80%	20%	0%
Show empathy	40%	40%	20%
Reconcile differences	30%	40%	30%
Help others	70%	30%	0%

Staff Survey

At the conclusion of the intervention, 11 surveys were given to those staff members that had direct contact with the students involved in the action research. Ten of the eleven surveys distributed were completed and returned. The pre and post staff survey results are compared in Table 12.

The behaviors that were problematic in the fall were the lack of expressing excuse me and I'm sorry and showing empathy, with the most serious concern being in their lack of appropriately reconciling differences. The staff survey reflects a marked improvement in the exhibited prosocial behaviors of the children. The greatest area of improvement was with the children's display of good manners. Saying please and thank you increased by 79%, followed by taking turns, saying excuse me, and I'm sorry. Although there was an increase in the children's showing empathy and reconciling differences, these still remain areas of concern as indicated by both the parent questionnaire and staff surveys as well as the teacher behavior checklist.

Teacher Behavior Checklists

Tally sheets were kept for the first 3 weeks of the new school year and the last week of the intervention. Although behavior checklists were kept for the first 3 weeks, weeks 1 and 2 were not used for comparison. It was felt that at the kindergarten level, these first 2 weeks were an adjustment period and did not reflect typical behavior. In week three, the comfort level of students rose and therefore their behavior was a more accurate portrayal of children in this age group. The results of the behavior incident checklist tallies are listed in Table 13.

Table 13 indicates that there were decreases in every area except one. While there was an overall decline in behavior incidents, the areas that were problematic in September continued to be troublesome in January. For example, interrupts conversation and bothers or annoys others continued to get high tally marks. Behaviors that were not problematic in September continued to not be a substantial problem. The only area that increased in tallies was does not accept losing. Contrarily, does not say please and thank you showed the greatest improvement with the amount of tallies decreasing from 246 to 88. Teacher anecdotal records supported these findings.

Table 13

Teacher Behavior Checklist, Number of Incidents of Problematic Behavior

Behaviors	Pre	Post
Does not share	17	11
Always needs to be first	45	23
Does not take turns	31	8
Interrupts conversations	80	43
Talks back/defiant	13	9
Bothers/annoys others	62	47
Does not accept losing	3	5
Does not respect other's belongings	24	13
Is physically aggressive	23	8
Does not resolve conflicts appropriately	20	7
Does not show respect to others	19	2
Does not say please, thank you etc.	246	88
Does not show empathy	16	9
Does not help others	26	4
Does not follow rules	75	31
Total:	700	308

Teacher Anecdotal Records

Classroom anecdotal records maintained during the intervention supported the findings of the behavior checklist. As the intervention progressed throughout the 20 week period, the

number and severity of incidents displaying negative behaviors has had a marked decrease. For example, the student that talked back and kicked a teacher no longer behaves so inappropriately. At the end of the intervention period, he was more able to resolve conflicts using words and not getting physical. When playing with the plastic endangered animals, another child asked for the animals. Prior to the intervention, this student would push the child and rudely tell him to go away. Now he is able to tell the child that he is taking his turn but will give him the animals when he is finished. Although the student is still very assertive, he is no longer as aggressive or as rude. The kindergarten girl who previously displayed anger by refusing to participate in activities, now returns to her table and although she may pout, she continues to work on her tasks. She is better able to control her anger and does not resort to tantrums. The other student that also acted out with temper tantrums has learned alternate ways of handling his anger, such as taking a break from the group and returning to his seat to cool down.

Positive changes have occurred throughout the intervention as indicated by the four forms of assessment. These positive outcomes reflected the effectiveness of a designed instructional plan for teaching prosocial behavior. The following section presents conclusions based on these results.

Conclusions and Recommendations

There were many positive outcomes as a result of the direct teaching of social skills. Cooperative learning activities, conflict resolution techniques, and family communication were also instrumental in improving the prosocial behaviors of the children.

Through direct teaching, children were taught the skills necessary for working in a group and techniques for solving conflicts. Literature presented the scenarios for discussion and role-play provided the opportunities for practice. Throughout the intervention, authentic literature was carefully selected as the impetus for the teaching of social skills within the curriculum. Stories were age appropriate and the children related well to the characters. As well as

improving the social skills of the students through direct teaching, cooperative learning was another essential element of teaching prosocial behavior.

Cooperative learning provided the students with the framework for working together peacefully. Working together as partners and in small groups not only taught them how to be a group member in the school setting, but also provided the basis for successful life-long interaction with others. It allowed for trying skills out, making mistakes, and trying again, as the children developed appropriate interpersonal skills. When teaching the children to work in cooperative groups, conflict resolution proved to be the complimentary component to cooperative learning.

Conflict resolution enhanced the children's working in cooperative groups by teaching them techniques on problem solving. These included identifying the conflict and problem, learning what steps to take when angry, and using active listening. Instead of the teacher solving the problem, the students were encouraged to take ownership for their conflicts and to resolve the problem themselves. Parents were kept informed of conflict resolution strategies so they too could implement these in real-life situations.

As part of the intervention, the monthly and weekly newsletters provided a link to further increase home/school communication. By informing the parents of the monthly theme, they were given a reference for discussion and ideas were suggested for reinforcement of the program at home. Keeping the parents aware of what was being done weekly in class kept communication open between home and school. Parents commented at Back-to-School night, while volunteering in the building, through phone and written communications, and while at conferences, on the value and importance of continuing the program. An overwhelming amount of parents, when responding to the open-ended question, stated that the CAP program was not

only beneficial to their child at school, but was helping the entire family. Comments included that being a CAP applied to all children as well as adults. It did away with terms such as "good girl" and "good boy"; instead, everyone was referred to as a caring, able person. Parents noted that they were almost coerced into being CAP's by their children, because of having to model what the children were preaching. Furthermore, parents said they were made to reflect on their own behavior and interaction with others.

It is recommended by the teacher researchers and suggested by parent comments, that previous monthly themes be revisited and reinforced as each new theme is added. This is imperative in order for internalization of the prosocial behaviors to occur. This increased communication between school and home was found to be essential to the success of the intervention. Although it was believed that the intervention would be beneficial, the degree of transfer from school to home was not anticipated. The children were able to apply the learned skills to their family interactions. This turned out to be the key to the success of the intervention.

All the components: direct teaching, cooperative learning, conflict resolution, and family communication were interwoven for the teaching of prosocial behavior. It is recommended that for the intervention to be successful the components be interlaced throughout the curriculum. In spite of an already demanding curriculum, the instruction and implementation of the action plan was manageable. Prior to the intervention year, an excessive amount of time was spent throughout the year addressing prosocial behavior and conflict resolution. Without an effective plan, both the teaching of social skills and the curriculum suffered. Although it seemed an exorbitant amount of time was devoted to the direct teaching of the social skills at the start of the intervention, as the plan progressed and as the children displayed more appropriate behavior, less

time was spent in the teaching of prosocial behavior. More time was now available for practice and guidance as well as simultaneously allowing more time on the curriculum.

Two strategies that were not implemented were the talking stick and sociodramatic play. The talking stick would further reinforce good listening skills as taught with the Be A Listener chart. Sociodramatic play would provide for creative role play interacting with others. It is suggested that both the talking stick and sociodramatic play be included in the future to provide students with additional practice and opportunities for internalizing social competencies.

A highlight of the intervention that evolved once the plan began was the creation of the CAP badge. The concept of the CAP badge was designed for one child to wear designating him/her as the CAP helper at the table for the week. This helper was responsible for getting supplies, journals, collecting papers, as well as reminding others at the table to get their name shirts, gym shoes, tool cases, in addition to cleaning the table. This provided opportunities for children to interact and apply the learned appropriate skills for problem solving. The role enabled both the CAP helper and his/her peers to develop a mutual respect. This strategy was an overwhelming success. The CAP badge came about after reading the "Goose Story" to the children. This story provided discussion on cooperation and working together as a team. Each goose had a turn at being the leader when flying; when he tired, another flew up to take the lead. The CAP helper at each table was designed so that every child could experience being the leader with all working together for the good of the group. The children have manifested the wearing of this little symbol into an honor. They eagerly await their turn for wearing the badge and having the honor of being the CAP helper.

As a result of the intervention, the exhibited social competencies of the kindergarten students did show improvement. The researchers at the kindergarten site will continue to use

these strategies in their classrooms and will encourage colleagues to consider implementing these interventions. Early intervention is crucial. Furthermore, it is recommended that this type of intervention be woven throughout the curriculum, spiraling up through the grade levels. The CAP does not stop here.

REFERENCES

Anderson, E., Redman, G. & Rogers. C. (1991). Self-esteem for tots to teens. Wayzata, MN: Parenting & Teaching Publications, Inc.

Arnow, J. (1995). Teaching peace. New York, NY: The Berkley Publishing Group.

Bellanca, J. & Fogarty, R. (1991). Blueprints for thinking in the cooperative classroom. Arlington Heights, IL: IRI SkyLight Training And Publishing, Inc.

Bellanca, J. (1992). Building a caring, cooperative classroom. In A. Costa, J. Bellanca & Fogarty (Eds.), If minds matter: A foreword to the future. Vol. 2. Designs for change (pp. 201-203). Arlington Heights, IL: IRI SkyLight Training And Publishing, Inc.

Benson, P.L. & Galbraith, J., M.A. & Espeland, P. (1998). What kids need to succeed. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing Inc.

Berreth, D. & Berman, S. (1997). The moral dimensions of schools. Educational Leadership, 54 (8), 24-27.

Bowlby, J. (1977). The making and breaking of affectional bonds. British Journal of Psychiatry, 130, 201-210.

Carlsson-Paige, N., & Levin, D. (1992). Making peace in violent times: A constructivist approach to conflict resolution. Young Children, 48 (1), 4-13.

Coleman, M. (1997). Families and schools: In search of common ground. Young Children, 52 (5), 14-21.

Damon, W. (1988). The moral child: Nurturing children's natural moral growth. New York: The Free Press.

Dewey, J. (1963). Experience and education. New York: Collier Books.

Dinwiddie, S. A. (1994). The saga of Sally, Sammy, and the red pen: Facilitating children's social problem solving. Young Children, 51 (2), 13-19.

Eaton, M. (1997). Positive discipline: Fostering the self-esteem of young children. Young Children, 52 (6), 44-46.

Elias, M., & Weissberg, R. (1990). School-based social competence promotion as a primary prevention strategy: A tale of two projects. Prevention in Human Services, 7 (1), 177-185.

Fayden. (1997). Children's Choice: Planting the seeds for creating a thematic

sociodramatic center. Young Children, 52 (3), 16.

Garbarino, J. (1997). Educating children in a socially toxic environment. Educational Leadership, 54 (7), 12-16.

Gartrell, D. (1987). Assertive discipline: Unhealthy for children and other living things. Young Children, 42 (2), 10-11 and 40-51.

Glenn, H.S., & Nelsen, J., (1988). Raising self-reliant children in a self-indulgent world. Rocklin, California: Prima Publishing & Communications.

Goffin, S.G. (1987). Cooperative Behaviors: They need our support. Young Children, 42 (2), 75-81.

Golant, S., & Golant, M., Ph.D. (1990). Kindergarten, it isn't what it used to be. Los Angeles, California: RGA Publishing Group, Inc.

Gordon, T. (1970). Parent effectiveness training. New York: Peter H. Wyden, Inc.

Gordon, T. (1989). Teaching children self-discipline at home and at school. New York: Times Books.

Greenberg, P. (1991). Character development: Encouraging self-esteem & self-discipline in infants, toddlers, & two-year-olds. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Hendrick, J. (1992). When does it all begin? Teaching the principles of democracy in the early years. Young Children, 47 (3), 51-53.

Henley, M. (1997). Six surefire strategies to improve classroom discipline. Learning, 26 (1), 43-45.

Hill, B.A. (1997). Time-out for children. Garden City Park, NY: Avery Publishing Group.

Hodgkinson, H. (1985). All one system. Washington, D.C.: Institute for Educational Leadership.

Honig, A.S., & Wittmer, D.S. (1996). Helping children become more prosocial: Ideas for classrooms, families, schools, and communities. Young Children, 51 (2), 62-71.

Joyce, B. & Weil, M. (1996). Models of teaching. Needham Heights, Mass: A Simon & Schuster Company.

Kamii, C. (1984a). Autonomy: The aim of education envisioned by Piaget. Phi Delta Kappan, 65 (6), 410-415.

Kamii, C. (1984b). Obedience is not enough. Young Children, 39 (4), 11-14.

Kauffman, J. & Burbach, H. (1997). Uncreating a climate of classroom civility. Phi Delta Kappan, 79, (4), 320-324.

Kauffman, J. & Burbach, H. (1998). Creating classroom civility. The Educational Digest, 12-1.

Kohn, A. (1997). How not to teach values: A critical look at character education. Phi Delta Kappan, 78 (6), 429-437.

Kreidler, W.J. (1995). Stepping into another's shoes. Instructor, 104 (6), 26-27.

Lantieri, L. & Patti, J. (1996). The road to peace in our schools. Educational Leadership, 54, 28-31.

Lawhon, T. (1997). Encouraging friendships among children. Childhood Education, 73 (4), 228-231.

Levine, B. (1998). How to raise a really considerate kid. Redbook, 176.

Lions Club International, (1990). Lions quest: Skills for growing. Granville, OH: Quest International.

Logan, T. (1998). Creating a kindergarten community. Young Children, 53 (2), 22-26.

McCabe, M. & Rhoades, J. (1992). Developing responsibility through cooperation. In A. Costa, J. Bellanca & Fogarty (eds.), If minds matter: a foreword to the future. Vol. 2. Designs for change (pp. 209-219). Arlington Heights, IL: IRI SkyLight Training And Publishing, Inc.

Merrell, K. (1994). Preschool and kindergarten behavior scales (Test Manual). Brandon, VT: Clinical Psychology Publishing Company, Inc.

Murphy, D. (1997). Parent and teacher plan for the child. Young Children, 52 (4), 32-36.

Newman, F. (1993). Children in crisis. Canada: Scholastic Canada Ltd.

Noddings, N. (1992). The challenge to care in schools. New York: Teachers College Press.

Oden, S., & Asher, S.R. (1997). Coaching children in social skills for friendship making. Child Development, 48, 495-506.

Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) of the U.S. Department of Education. (1999). Children and TV Research. (Computer Document www.babtplace.com/uu4.htm).

O'Neil, J. (1996). On emotional intelligence: A conversation with Daniel Goleman. Educational Leadership, 54 (7), 6-11.

Orlick, T. (1982). The second cooperative sports and games book. New York: Random House, Inc.

Pacific Life Foundation. (1997). Children & television: Frequently asked questions. (Computer Document www.epn.org/cme/ctatool/c_and_t.htm.).

Pica, R. (1997). Beyond physical development: Why young children need to move. Young Children, 52 (6), 4-11.

Shure, M., & Spivak, G. (1980). Interpersonal problem solving as a mediator of behavioral adjustment in preschool and kindergarten children. Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 1, 37-52.

Smith, M.E. (1993). Television Violence and Behavior: A Research Summary. ERIC Digest. Syracuse, NY: ERIC Clearinghouse for Information and Technology. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 366 329).

Spangler, C.B. (1997). The sharing circle: A child-centered curriculum. Young Children, 52 (5), 74-78. (1993).

Stephen, H. (1993). Conflict Resolution with young children. (Report No. ISBN-l-86323-030-4). Watson, Australia: Australian Early Childhood Association, Inc. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 369 502).

Stephens, K. (1992). What's so positive about discipline? And other mysteries of child guidance. Child Care Information Exchange 87, 30-33.

Stone, S.J. (1993). Taking time to teach social skills. Childhood Education, 69 (4), 194.

Swisher, K. (1997). Single-parent families. At issue series. (Report No. ISBN-1-56510-543-5). California: Greenhaven Press, Inc. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED403358).

Wickert, S. (1989). Keeping the peace: Practicing cooperation and conflict resolution with preschoolers. Philadelphia: New Society.

Williamson, P., Ph.D. (1990). Good kids, bad behavior. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Windell, J. (1991). Discipline. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company and Maxwell Macmillan Canada, Inc.

Wittmer, D.S., & Honig, A.S. (1994). Encouraging positive social development in young children. Young Children, 49 (5), 4-11.

Zimmerman, T. & Shapiro, L. (1996). Sometimes I feel like I don't have any friends (but not so much anymore): A self esteem book to help children improve their social skills (Introduction). King of Purssia, PA: The Center for Applied Psychology, Inc.

Appendix A
Parent Questionnaire

KINDERGARTEN PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
1. Shares toys and other belongings				
2. Important to always be first				
3. Willing to take turns (playing games, standing in line, playing with toys)				
4. Wants all the attention				
5. Waits for his/her turn to speak				
6. Talks back to parents, teachers or caregiver				
7. Follows the rules				
8. Must have his/her own way				
9. Follows directions the first time				
10. Does not accept losing in a game				
11. Accepts decisions made by adults				
12. Whines or complains				
13. Regularly uses the following words:				
Please				
Thank you				
Excuse me				
I'm sorry				
14. Bothers or annoys others				
15. Invites other children to play				
16. Destroys or takes things that belong to others				
17. Stands up for his/her rights				
18. Is physically aggressive				
19. Resolves conflict by:				
Talking it out				
Leaving the situation				
Getting physical				
20. Does not show respect to adults and other children (pouts, stomps, grabs)				

Please complete the following question by checking the most appropriate answer.

1. Marital Status
   married ___ divorced ___ single ___ other
2. Birth order of child
   oldest ___ middle ___ youngest ___ only
3. Attends daycare facility
   never ___ part-time ___ full-time
4. Has care giver other than parent
   never ___ sometime ___ part-time ___ full-time
5. Child attended preschool
   yes ___ no
6. Approximate hours watching TV / week
   0 - 7 ___ 8 - 14 ___ 15 - 21 ___ 22 or more

Information provided will remain anonymous and confidential.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix B
Staff Survey

Dear Kindergarten Staff,

Excuse us for the interruption in your day. We are very **empathetic** to how busy you are at the start of the school year. We are **sorry** for **taking** our **turn** in taking up your time by asking you to complete the following questionnaire. But **please help** us by **sharing** your input.

Please accept this attached treat in hopes it **reconciles** any hostile feelings you may have initially felt.

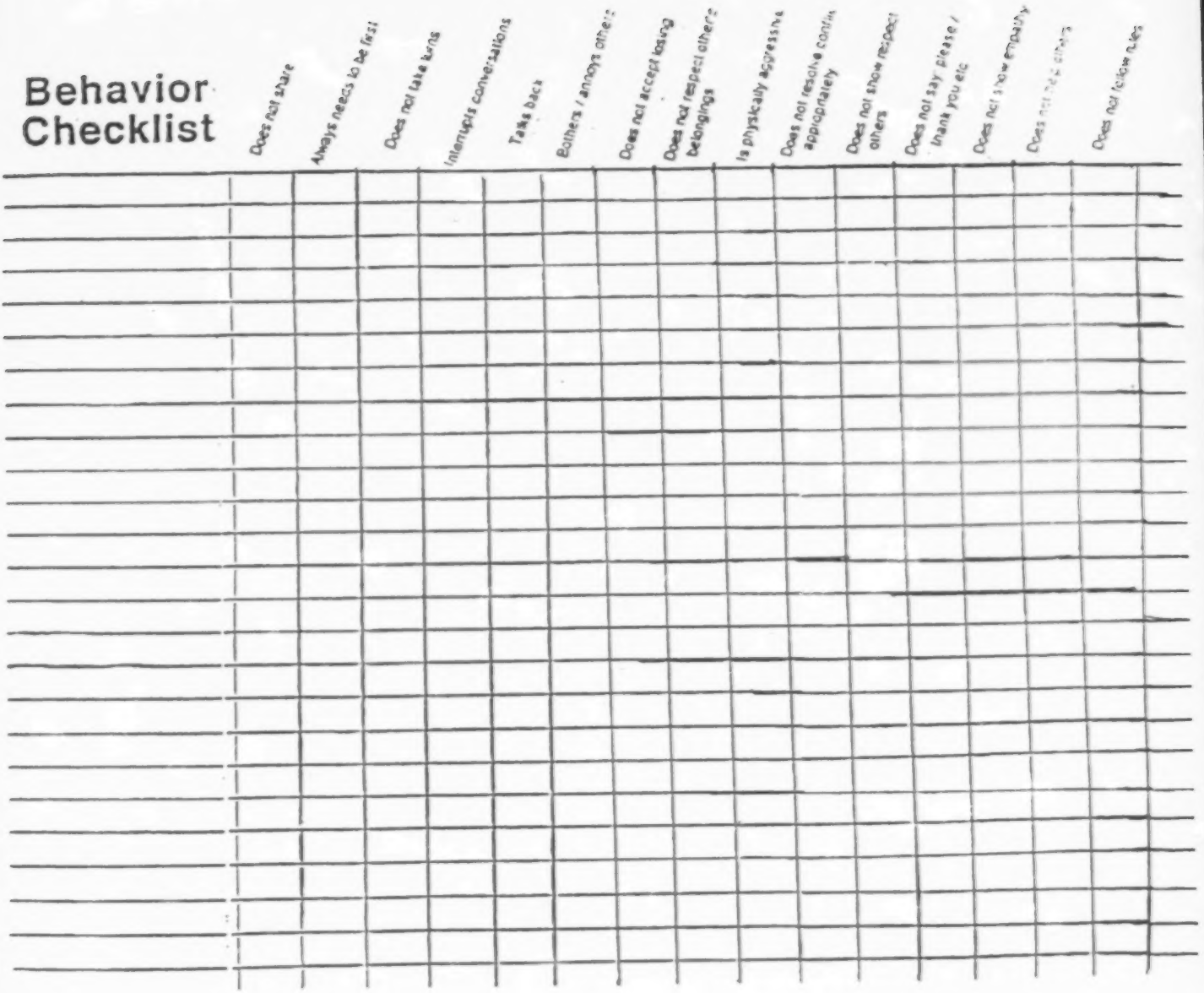
Thank you for being such a Caring, Able, Person.

Lisa
Leslie
Tara
Chris

We would appreciate your input by checking the behaviors you generally observe in our building.

Kindergartners display the following behaviors:	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom
Say: Please/Thank you			
Say: Excuse me/I'm sorry			
Share			
Take turns			
Show empathy			
Reconcile differences			
Help others			

Appendix C
Behavior Checklist


Behavior Checklist
Does not share
Always needs to be first
Does not take turns
Interrupts conversations
Talks back
Bothers / annoys others
Does not accept losing
Does not respect others belongings
Is physically aggressive
Does not resolve conflict appropriately
Does not show respect to others
Does not say please / thank you etc
Does not show empathy
Does not help others
Does not follow rules

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix D
Suggested Literature for Developing Social Skills

Caring and Sharing.

Behrens, June. El Libro De Los Modales.
Blueberry Bears.
Lionni, Leo. It's Mine.
Moncure, Jane Belk. Caring Book.
Riley, Karen. What Does It Mean to Share?
Silverstein, Shel. The Giving Tree

Friendships

Ashley, Bernard. Cleversticks.
Cannon, Janell. Stellaluna.
Carle, Eric. Do You Want To Be My Friend?
De Beer, Hans. Little Polar Finds A Friend.
Hale, Irina. How I Found A Friend.
Mayer, Mercer. Just My Friend and Me.
Reiser, Lynn. Margaret And Margarita.
Rosenberry, Vera. Vera's First Day of School.
Schaffer, Frank. Higgity, Biggety Bumble Bee.
Schaffer, Frank. School Is Fun.
Wills, Geoffrey. Care Bears, A Friend For Frances.

Good Listening

Gambill, Henrietta. Are You Listening?
Kuskin, Karla. Roar and More.
Lester, Helen. Listen, Buddy.
Martin, Bill. Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?
Meddaugh, Susan. Martha Speaks.
Neasi, Barbara J. Listen to Me.

Good Manners

Berenstain, Stan & Jan. The Berenstain Bears, Go to School.
Bridwell, Norman. Clifford's Good Deeds.
Clise, Michele Durkson. No Bad Bears.
Henkes, Kevin. Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse.
Hutchins, Pat. Llaman a la Puerta.
Joslin, Sesyle. What Do You Say, Dear?
Meyer, Kathleen Allan. Bear, Your Manners Are Showing.
Moncure, Jane Belk. Que Puedes Decir Cuando Un Monito Actua Asi?
Moncure, Jane Belk. What Do You Say When A Monkey Acts This Way?
Scarry, Richard. Please and Thank You Book.
Ziefert, Harriet. What's Polite?

Showing Kindness and Conflict Resolution

Berenstain, Stan & Jan. The Berenstain Bears And Too Much Teasing.
Berenstain, Stan & Jan. The Berenstain Bears And The In-Crowd.
Bottner, Barbara. Bootsie Barker Bites.
Brett, Jan. The Mitten.
Brett, Jan. Town Mouse-Country Mouse.
Bridwell, Norman. Clifford's Valentine. El Primer Dia de San Valentin.
Clifton, Lucille. Three Wishes.
De Paola, Tomie. The Knight and the Dragon.
Lionni, Leo. Six Crows.
Parkes, Brenda & Smith, Judith. El Patito Feo. The Ugly Duckling.
Rogers, Fred. Making Friends.
Williams, Vera. A Chair for My Mother. Un Sillon Para Mi Mama.

Appendix E
Caring Able People Pledge

The C.A.P. Pledge

Today I will do my best to be a Caring, Able Person.

Appendix F
Monthly CAP Themes

C.A.P.

Caring, Able People

MONTHLY SKILLS

September	Be a Listener
October	Saying "Please, Thank You and Excuse Me"
November	Displaying Sharing and Caring Behaviors
December	Helping Others
January	Getting Along
February	Showing Kindness and Conflict Resolution
March	Cooperation-Celebrating You and Me
April	Making Healthy Choices
May	Developing Self Respect

Appendix G
Be A Listener Chart

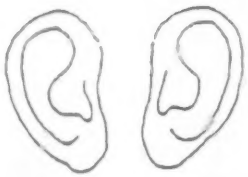
Be a Listener

STOP

Stop moving, stop talking.

LOOK

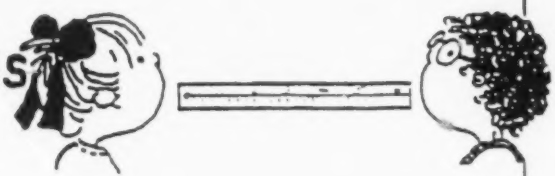
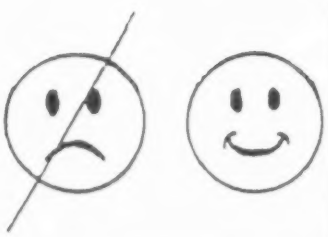
Look at the talker.

LISTEN 

Listen with your ears.

Appendix H
Cooperate Chart

Cooperate

- Use 6" voices 
- Listen to your neighbor
- Stay with the group
- Look at the speaker
- Don't hurt feelings 

Appendix I
If You're Mad Chart

Caring Able People:

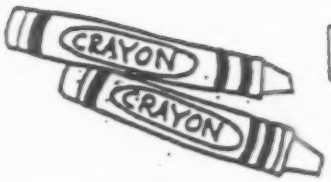
1. Count to 5.

2. Talk it out.

3.Walk away.

4.Take a break.

Appendix J
Weekly Newsletter



Mrs. White's Class News

Week of _____

This week's books:

Here's what we did this week:

Gym:

Happy Happenings:

Music:

Library:

C.A.P. Theme:

Reminders:

Happy Birthday to:

Sound Zoo:

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix K
Pre and Post Parent Questionnaires

Table K1

Pre Kindergarten Parent Questionnaire, Positive Prosocial Behaviors, August 27 and August 30, 1999

Odd Numbered Questions		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
1.	Shares toys and other belongings	0%	17%	24%	75%
3.	Willing to take turns	0%	0%	29%	71%
5.	Waits for his/her turn to speak	7%	9%	47%	37%
7.	Follows the rules	0%	1%	33%	66%
9.	Follows directions the first time	1%	3%	44%	52%
11.	Accepts decisions made by adults	1%	4%	26%	69%
13.	Regularly uses the following words:				
	Please	1%	0%	42%	57%
	Thank you	0%	3%	34%	63%
	Excuse me	4%	1%	42%	53%
	I'm sorry	4%	6%	44%	46%
15.	Invites other children to play	0%	9%	30%	61%
17.	Stands up for his/her rights	7%	10%	54%	29%
19.	Resolves conflict by:				
	Talking it out	3%	20%	47%	30%
	Leaving the situation	6%	16%	57%	21%
	Not getting physical	26%	33%	38%	3%

Table K2

Post Kindergarten Parent Questionnaire, Positive Prosocial Behaviors, February 9, 2000

Odd Numbered Questions	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
1. Shares toys and other belongings	0%	2%	15%	83%
3. Willing to take turns	0%	0%	24%	76 %
5. Waits for his/her turn to speak	2%	12%	52%	34%
7. Follows the rules	1%	0%	19%	80%
9. Follows directions the first time	2%	5%	42%	52%
11. Accepts decisions made by adults	0%	0%	26%	74%
13. Regularly uses the following words:				
Please	0%	2%	22%	76%
Thank you	0%	0%	26%	74%

Appendix L
Open Ended Parent Questionnaire

February 27, 2000

Dear Parents,

Once again we need your help. We are on the home stretch with our research action project and need some feed back on the Caring Able People program (C.A.P.). Do you think the C.A.P. program has influenced your child's behavior at home? If so, in what way? Please indicate your observations at the bottom of this page. We need this information returned as soon as possible and again, no names please. Thank you for your time and support.

Sincerely,

Lisa Chiappetta
Leslie Harris
Tara Moncada
Chris White